

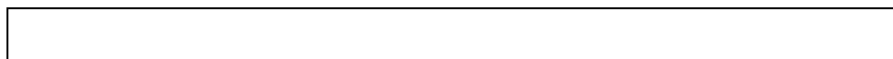
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Senior Executive Intelligence Brief

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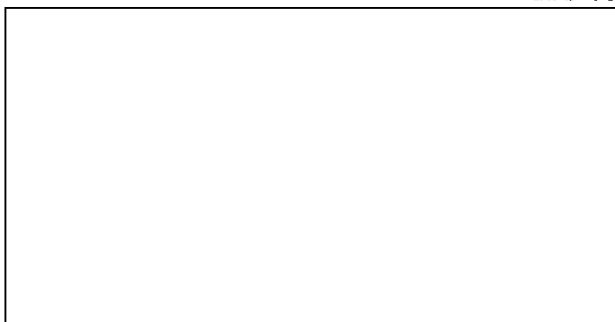
Monday, 11 January 1999

National Security Information

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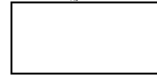
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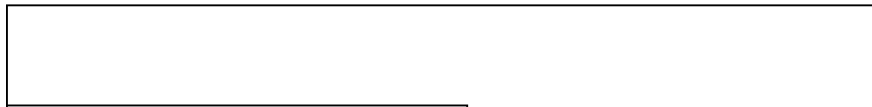
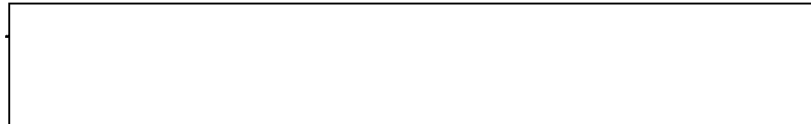
Russia:
Analytic Perspective



Trying To Keep Nuclear Options Open

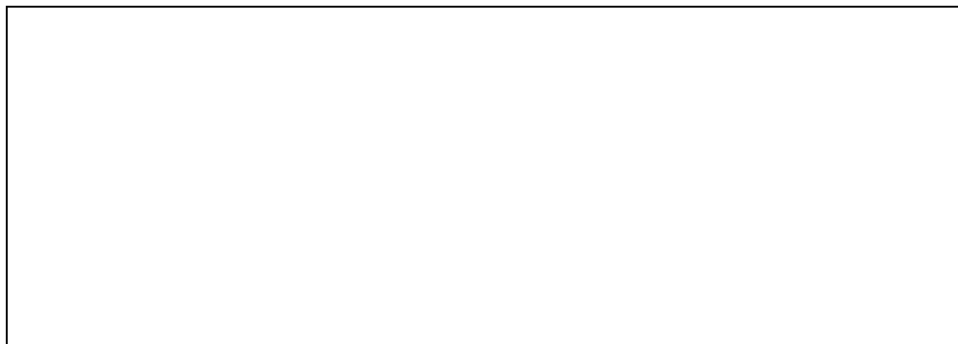


Russia's efforts to modernize its nuclear weapons and strategic forces reflect its determination to preserve its claim to superpower status in the face of the decline of its conventional forces. Moscow also wants to keep its options open should arms control agreements collapse and the US proceed with a national ballistic missile defense.

- A Russian press announcement said the five experiments conducted late last year at the Novaya Zemlya nuclear test site were intended to enhance the safety and reliability of its nuclear weapons. The CIA cannot rule out that these experiments also were related to stockpile modernization or new weapons development.



 In addition, Moscow is developing an air-launched cruise missile for the bomber force and a "standardized" long-range ballistic missile for use as an SLBM and an ICBM, according to press reports. 



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Insufficient Resources Exacerbate Difficulties

Press reports indicate the SSBN force will suffer increasing patrol gaps and readiness difficulties, heavy bomber aviation will do little flight training and will not get additional aircraft under current funding restraints, and ballistic missile attack warning satellites and radars will continue to have gaps in coverage.

- The general cutback in training suggests SS-25 mobile ICBM deployments out of garrison will decline.

The cutbacks have prompted Russian officials publicly to warn that the strategic forces could face drastic degradation by the end of the next decade, but Moscow is prioritizing R&D and procurement programs to try to avoid such an outcome. Russian officials appear confident that they can deter large-scale nuclear or conventional attacks at least through the middle of the next decade.

- Officials publicly say such attacks are highly unlikely, but Moscow measures its capabilities against these worst case contingencies.
- Domestic critics charge that Moscow's reliance on nuclear weapons to counter a broad range of external threats and its adoption of limited nuclear options portend a lowering of the nuclear threshold and earlier use of nuclear weapons in a major war or regional conflict.

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